



Wisconsin State Legislature

FOR MORE INFORMATION
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Legislature Approves Alzheimer's and Dementia Bills

Alzheimer's disease is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States and is the only one of the top ten causes of death that cannot be prevented, cured, or treated, according to the Alzheimer's Association. There are currently 115,000 people in Wisconsin with Alzheimer's disease in the state and the Department of Health Services expects that number to increase by 68 percent in the next twenty years. Alzheimer's disease accounts for 70 percent of all dementias, but there are other kinds of dementia as well, including Vascular Dementia, Lewy Body Dementia, Frontal Temporal Lobe Dementia, and Creutzfeldt Jakob Disease.

With this in mind, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester) created the Speaker's Taskforce on Alzheimer's and Dementia last summer. The taskforce had hearings around the state to learn more about the challenges faced by people with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, their caregivers and the medical community. After hearing from experts, caregivers, state officials and other individuals, the taskforce introduced bipartisan legislation to improve care and help the state prepare for the expected increase in dementia as our population ages. I was in Green Bay with Governor Scott walker as he signed three of those bills into law on March 22nd.

One of the bills that was approved was Assembly Bill 786 (AB 786). This bill would require the Department of Health Services to study where people with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia are placed in crisis situations and submit this report to the legislature. The bill also requires the department to propose a pilot project for coalitions of two or more counties to create dementia crisis units. A dementia crisis unit would be better prepared to help an individual with

Alzheimer's or another form of dementia rather than calling the police or using other emergency resources. If these pilot units are successful, they could be replicated throughout the state.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, three quarters of Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers report that they are concerned about taking care of their own health while caregiving. The association estimates that the physical and emotional toll caused an additional \$9.7 billion in health care costs for caregivers. The 1985-87 state budget created a program called the Alzheimer's Family and Caregiver Support Program (AFCSP) to fund services for the families and caregivers of people with Alzheimer's and other dementias. The second bill from the taskforce addresses the needs of caregivers. Assembly Bill 787 (AB 787) provides an additional \$1 million for this program in order to provide respite care for caregivers. To be eligible for the state's Alzheimer's Family and Caregiver Support Program, an individual must have a dementia diagnosis or have a family member with the diagnosis, have an annual income of less than \$48,000 and live at home or in a community setting. Respite care provides temporary care for the person with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia so that their normal caregiver can take a break to relieve the stress caused by caring for someone with these diseases.

The third bill from the Taskforce on Alzheimer's and Dementia to become law is Assembly Bill 790 (AB790). This bill provides \$250,000 for grants for counties to provide training to their mobile crisis units on recognizing and helping people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. The intention is that the training will provide mobile crisis units with the knowledge and tools to assess and treat patient emergencies at the patient's home, rather than taking them to the hospital.

As our population ages, the challenges associated with caring for people with Alzheimer's and other dementias are likely to increase. I would like to thank the members of the Speaker's Taskforce on Alzheimer's and Dementia for their work on this important issue. You can read more about the work of the taskforce on their website:

<http://legis.wisconsin.gov/2015/committees/assembly/ad/>

If you have any questions about any of the information I have included or if you have suggestions on other topics or issues you would like learn more about, you may call my office toll-free at (800) 991-5541; write me at P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53708; or e-mail me at: Sen.Olsen@legis.state.wi.us. You can also sign up for our newsletter at our website: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/senate/sen14/news/index.htm>.

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